

ACCESS TO BEACON SINKING FUND FOR EXHIBITION

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Councillor Hugh Branney
LEAD OFFICER: Julie Betteridge, Head of Regeneration & Community
REPORT AUTHOR: Sue Palmer, Beacon Manager

WHAT BENEFITS WILL THESE PROPOSALS BRING TO COPELAND RESIDENTS?

Ensuring that The Beacon displays remain fresh safeguards visitor numbers and income targets in our year of transition to the partnership arrangement, and results in additional visitor spend in the local economy.

Bringing a major exhibition to Copeland will support the lifelong learning of all Copeland's residents.

WHY HAS THIS REPORT COME TO THE EXECUTIVE?

(eg Key Decision, Policy recommendation for Full Council, at request of Council, etc.)

For permission to access the Sinking Fund in Earmarked Reserves in 2013/14.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Members are requested to approve the use of up to £48,800 from The Beacon Sinking Fund to pump prime and cashflow a major exhibition.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In February 2005, Copeland approved the Beacon Business Plan which set out income and expenditure targets for the first 5 years of operation following the museum's refit.
- 1.2 External grant funders set the condition that all surplus generated during the five year plan would be collected in a sinking fund to be used to refit the galleries, ensuring a fresh and changing display, maintaining or increasing visitor levels as there would always be something new to see – without causing an additional cost to the Council. This is the Beacon Sinking Fund.
- 1.3 The Beacon was unable to begin its third of three gallery changes due to the Beacon PDG work during 2012, leaving the current balance of the fund as £115K. Although a future request will be made to access the fund to enable redevelopment of the museum galleries as part of our partnership activity, it is

hoped that the funds can first be used to pump prime a major exhibition for Summer/Autumn 2013.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 We have identified the Sea Monsters national exhibition as suitable to the Beacon and Copeland and provides the opportunity for the partners of the developing Beacon Partnership to work together, achieve income and visitor targets, and maintain public interest in The Beacon during our year of transition and partnership development.

2.2 Sea Monsters

For many millions of years, fierce predators have roamed the land. These include carnivorous dinosaurs, giant birds and sabre tooth cats, as well as the wolves, tigers and bears of today. But, at each period of the Earth's history, the predators that lived in the oceans have been larger and more fearsome. Take a trip through the history of the World's oceans and learn more about these incredible sea monsters and the technology used to make them hunt again.

Special features:

- Original scale models used by production companies (including BBC) to create film sequences
- Life sized replicas, as used for close-ups
- Full sized creature replicas. These include giant orthocone, nothosaur, archelon - and modern predators such as a 4 metre long great white shark and a 8 metre long giant squid
- Real fossils and casts in cases
- Large format graphics
- Television screens showing audio visual presentations
- Touch screen interactives
- Blue screen theatre where visitors can put themselves in the sea monsters' environment
- Virtual aquarium

2.3 The Beacon Partnership has been working to identify external sponsorship from supply chain companies within Copeland to assist with pump priming money to enable an exhibition during this transition year. This has not yet provided any cash resource to ensure the Beacon can secure an exhibition for this summer. The Beacon Sinking Fund as detailed in 1.2 has been set up for the purposes of maintaining a refresh of the Beacon and this temporary exhibition will enable a continued interest from local and wider visitors to Whitehaven and the Beacon Museum. To ensure a continuation of the strong brand and visitor numbers in

2013/14 and the absence of any external funding commitments we feel the use of the Beacon Sinking Fund to assist with cashflowing a major exhibition is necessary. Our experience with the Dinosaurs exhibition in 2011 evidences clearly the strength of a major exhibition to build brand and paying visitor numbers.

- 2.4 We already have a reserve on the Sea Monsters Exhibition for Summer 2013 and will be paying up front to receive a 20% cost reduction. This cost is £48,800 which includes installation, take down and 2 way transport and 3 months hire of the exhibition. Sea Monsters is planned to run from June to September 2013. We will require additional spend on temporary staff, cleaning materials, and hire of an air compressor. The latter was an in kind contribution from a local company for the Dinosaurs exhibition and we will look for this arrangement to provide the machinery to animate the Sea Monster exhibits.
- 2.5 The sinking fund currently holds in excess of £115,994 which has been collected solely for the purpose of refreshing the galleries. Further funds will be added to the pot at the end of 2012/13.
- 2.6 The Beacon will use up to a maximum of £48,800 from the sinking fund. Other external grant funds and sponsorship will continue to be sought and could reduce the amount used from the sinking fund.
- 2.7 Due to the timescales involved (Summer 2013 show), it is important that the project begins promptly and it is not possible to wait for external funding decisions. We have a two month lead in time to prepare for the exhibition.
- 2.8 Our costings, based on our working experience, detail an expectation that the exhibition will attract income to cover the exhibition costs. The Harbour Gallery would not be free for this exhibition. One admission ticket with a bespoke pricing arrangement of £6.50 for adults and £2.50 for children would cover the visitor Sea Monsters and the other exhibitions in the building. We are modelling our cashflow on 2,000 adult visitors and 2,000 children visitors per month during Sea Monsters providing £54,000 admission fees in total. Our retail expenditure increases with bespoke exhibitions and is estimated at £5,000 during the Sea Monsters Show.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED

- 3.1 Other sponsors are being sought for the exhibition which is why this report requests to access a maximum of £48,800 through the sinking fund ear marked reserve – the actual amount needed may be less than this but accessing the full amount now means that the project is able to proceed and the exhibition can be booked.

- 3.2 Do nothing? The exhibition “Treasures” featuring artefacts from the museum collection is opened on 30 March 2013 and this show could continue for as long as needed. This is within the free Harbour Gallery. The Beacon would not be able to maximise its visitor numbers and income potential on the basis of this exhibition.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 The projected income will cover the costs resulting from either exhibition, and enable additional marketing and staffing to cover for increased opening hours required to maximise potential income. All surplus income will be returned to the Beacon Sinking Fund at the end of the 2013/14 financial year as normal.
- 4.2 This is an appropriate use of the reserves set aside for Beacon exhibition development in the Beacon sinking fund and supports the development of the Beacon Partnership through maintaining visitor interest and keeping the Beacon Brand strong including sending out a clear message that the Beacon is still open and developing its way into a strong partnership and future.
- 4.3 The Beacon has successfully delivered a similar project before when the BBC’s Walking with Dinosaurs was displayed here during Summer, 2011. An additional 19,000 visitors came to see the exhibition, 40,692 visitors in total, buying £54,136 in tickets, and spending £36,288 in the shop.
- 4.4 The Sea Monsters themes will be appealing to both Copeland residents and visitors, engaging potential new audiences, and creating new community links.

5. STATUTORY OFFICER COMMENTS

- 5.1 The Monitoring Officer’s comments are: No further comment.
- 5.2 The Section 151 Officer’s comments are: If the projected visitor numbers are met or exceeded then income over and above the cost of the exhibition will be generated. If external sponsorship can be found to meet some of the costs, then income in excess of the cost of the exhibition will increase. If the projected visitor numbers are not met then and external sponsorship is not found then the exhibition may cost more to provide than the income it generates.
- 5.3 EIA Comments: The Beacon delivers its exhibitions to maximise engagement and participation by all members of the community through physical layout, access and opening times, cost and educational value for schools and young learners and for lifelong learning through its education team approach.

- 5.4 Policy Framework: The Beacon delivers against our Corporate Plan priority 2: To “ be an effective public service partner so we can get the best deal for Copeland” – our Beacon Partnership activity will deliver a continued Beacon and a major exhibition during the development year delivered within this partnership approach.
- 5.5 Other consultee comments, if any: The exhibition proposal has been shared with the Beacon Partnership partners Sellafield Ltd who view a major exhibition as an opportunity for early shared activity during the partnership development and Beacon transition year.

6. HOW WILL THE PROPOSALS BE PROJECT MANAGED AND HOW ARE THE RISKS GOING TO BE MANAGED?

- 6.1 The project will be managed in house using proven track record, experience and knowledge in exhibitions. Other than the exhibition providers, all other additional services will be procured locally. Specialist retail goods may have to be sourced nationally.
- 6.2 Weekly and monthly income reports are available throughout the year but especially during the exhibition period.
- 6.3 In accordance with the Beacon Business Plan, the sinking fund can only be used to develop the Beacon galleries and cannot be put to other uses. Failure to use the monies in this way could involve external funder clawback of grants amounting up to £1.8M.

7. WHAT MEASURABLE OUTCOMES OR OUTPUTS WILL ARISE FROM THIS REPORT?

- 7.1 There are two key outputs and one outcome:
- Output 1: Exhibition in place for Summer 2013.
 - Output 2: Visitor and Income targets are met to cover costs.
 - Outcome 1: Maintaining the Beacon brand during transition year.

List of Appendices

None

List of Background Documents:

Beacon Business Plan, Beacon Service Plan 2013-14